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*To the Alumni and Friends of the  
University of North Carolina:*

The following extract is from the report of the Treasurer of the University, in November, 1868:

"The indebtedness of the University is estimated to be not much less than \$60,000, though I have been unable to ascertain the exact amount. To secure these debts, a deed in trust was executed on the 30th of April, 1867, conveying about one thousand acres of land and other valuable property, in the county of Orange, belonging to the University, and also about five thousand acres of land in the county of Buncombe. The payment of these debts, or the closing of the trust, will be enforced at an early day, and it will be for the Legislature to determine whether this valuable property shall be sold under the trust, or a sufficient appropriation be made to satisfy the debts, and thereby redeem the property."

It is hoped that a judicial determination will soon be had which will more precisely fix the liabilities of the University. I deem the present a suitable time, when I may, as an *Alumnus*, submit a proposition for its relief. Before doing so, however, it will not be improper for me to recur briefly to some leading events that have marked my connection with the Institution.

I entered the Freshman Class of the University in the year 1849, at the age of seventeen, and graduated in 1853. During the same year I was appointed by the Trustees to the Tutorship of Mathematics and entered upon the discharge of my duties in that department in January, 1854. Six years thereafter I was appointed, without application, to the position of Adjunct Professor of Pure Mathematics. As there were at that time two Professors of Mathematics,

and my promotion left no Tutor in that department, I accepted this act on the part of the Trustees as a token of their favor; and having declined invitations to full Professorships in two other institutions of learning, continued in the service of the University. The vocation was congenial to my feelings, and I regarded the position as one of usefulness and honor. In 1866 I applied to the Trustees for a furlough. The reason offered by me for this step was, that the scanty and insufficient sum derived through the limited patronage which the University then had, might all go to eke out the salaries of my older colleagues in the Faculty. The application was promptly granted, and I resolved to hold myself in readiness to return to the Institution whenever the Trustees might request my services. In 1868 I was appointed a Trustee, and in January, 1869, I was invited to the Presidency.

I had observed the management and condition of the University too closely to be ignorant of its great embarrassment at that time. I was not unmindful of the heavy responsibilities with which my re-entrance upon duty, in this new position, would burden me. I saw that the number of students had greatly decreased; that the Institution had lost much of its former prestige; that its endowment was gone; that its valuable property had been mortgaged for heavy debts, some of which, especially those due the estate of its former President, were legal and entirely just; that the buildings were in need of repairs, and their roofs leaking to such a degree as to imperil the books and property in the Libraries; that although the death of President Swain had occurred several months before, and the Trustees, at a *public* meeting, held in the Senate Chamber, in the City of Raleigh, in November, had taken action looking to the appointment of a Faculty on the first day of January following, yet, so far as I could ascertain, there had been no applicant for the position, nor was any one known to be willing to assume the duties and responsibilities of the Presidency under such embarrassing circumstances. I was recalled, and the position was tendered to me. For a moment I hesitated. Some of my

friends advised me to decline the offer. They believed that my best efforts would prove but a thankless task. They reminded me of my duty to my family. I was holding a quiet and remunerative office, from which I realized an actual income much greater than I could even hope, under the most favorable circumstances, to receive as President of the University. I was aware that my predecessor had been a gentleman of rare talents and long experience, and that his place would be difficult to fill. I foresaw that every act of mine would be the subject of keen criticism, and dreaded to undertake the performance of a task so hazardous.

On the other hand, the exercises of the Institution had been suspended, and it was suggested that, should I refuse my services, the day might be distant on which its doors could be re-opened. I was convinced that the buildings should be occupied, and was unwilling that the superior facilities for education, which could here be afforded, should remain unoffered while so many of our youth were growing up in idleness or turning their steps to the Colleges of other and distant States. Neither the former Board of Trustees nor the present one, in their conduct towards me, had given me any cause of complaint. Both had seemed to manifest their partiality by tendering me positions which other gentlemen were more competent than myself to fill. At my own request the Trustees of the University had promptly granted me leave of absence; I returned at their bidding.

By some, my course has been severely censured. By others, it has been warmly approved and applauded. It has not yet occasioned me any regret or self-reproach.

I supposed that the present Trustees were a legally constituted body, and that their offer to me was made in good faith. When they invited me to my present position, it was not distinctly stated that my services would be required for only a limited time; nor have I yet been officially informed as to the precise date when my term of office will expire. Yet it has been generously intimated to me by other parties, from time to time, through the

columns of our State papers, that my successor would soon be chosen. I have recently had the honor of observing the nomination of several distinguished gentlemen for my position.

I have always desired to see a fair and free discussion of all questions pertaining to the University. In my first public report, at the annual commencement in June, 1869, I invited a careful public scrutiny of the Institution. I have not objected to a just and respectful criticism. Misrepresentation, ridicule and scandal are resorted to only by the consciously weak, but with the ignorant they are often more potent than truth and reason. The vulgar and unscrupulous deal blows which gentlemen of cultivation and refinement seldom condescend to give, and often find themselves poorly prepared to parry.

I have not infrequently found it difficult to distinguish the friends of the University from its enemies. Some who should be its friends, by an indefatigable use of their pens, have done much to turn the tide of patronage away from the Institution and the State. It is to be regretted that the efforts of anonymous writers, who claim to be its friends, have only tended to bring the University into disrepute. If their time and ingenuity had been more judiciously expended, all differences might long ago have been adjusted, all classes reconciled, and the Institution set forward upon a career of prosperity and usefulness. If the immense service so freely rendered, had been differently directed, and the labors of these professed friends had been combined in some useful employment, in the field or the factory, they might have earned enough money to pay off the debt that now weighs down the Institution.

I have entertained the opinion that the present unfortunate condition of the University has resulted mainly from its financial embarrassment. Had it been free from debt in 1869, and able to boast of an endowment yielding a handsome income, the course pursued towards it would have been very different. Prior to the war it was well endowed and prosperous. Its Trustees were not compelled to look long or far away for Professors to fill its vacant

chairs. Its defects, though observed, were not eagerly published. The tongue of scandal was silent. True friends are sometimes more clearly revealed in the darkness of adversity than in the light of prosperity.

While the debts of the University are unpaid, and it continues to be made a theme of political discussion by the press and upon the stump, there can be but little hope of its real prosperity and usefulness. So long as it is felt that the whole character of the Institution must be affected by the ascendancy of this or that party, it cannot receive the confidence and support of the people. There should be one place, at least, in North Carolina to which our youth may retire from the din and heat of party strife, to pursue in quiet the walks of Literature and Science. That place should be the University. In reply to a letter from me, one of the purest and most energetic men of the State writes, under date of April 26th, 1870: "Cordially do I reciprocate your expression that political fervor and partizan strife are the grand errors of our people at this time. That they are not only the occasion of our barren and desolate fields, but are sowing seeds of bitterness in families and neighborhoods, and of irreligion and infidelity in the hearts of our children. This quotation from your letter should be emblazoned upon the doors of all our public offices and institutions, and places of pleasure and business, and its spirit cherished in the hearts of all our fellow-citizens, and then would soon arise a brighter and better day for the impoverished and struggling citizens of our mother State. As long as her rippling waters flow from her mountains to the ocean, or the pine trees of her eastern plains shall bend before impending storms, I shall love her in all her parts, in all her interests, and in all her population."

In the months of August and September, 1869, I published in the *Raleigh Sentinel*, over the signature of "A NORTH CAROLINIAN," a series of communications upon the subject of the "*University and the Public Schools*." In the last of these I took occasion to use the following language: "During the decade beginning with the year



1808, the University recorded 715 matriculates and 110 graduates. Beginning with the year 1818, there were 1,308 matriculates and 259 graduates; with the year 1828, there were 1,005 matriculates and 146 graduates; with the year 1838, there were 1,597 matriculates and 308 graduates; with the year 1848, there were 2,923 matriculates and 448 graduates; with the year 1858, there were 1,872 matriculates and 410 graduates; making a grand total of nearly 10,000 matriculates.

During the period of twenty years, beginning with June, 1848, nearly one thousand of these were my college mates, and above three thousand have been my pupils. Many of those who were dear to me in life's spring-time, and whose increasing usefulness I watched with anxious and affectionate interest, now rest quietly in their graves. Their names are upon the record that lies before me, and their memory is yet pleasant as the "fragrance of flowers fresh fallen." Many still survive, and from them, scattered all over the land, come frequent letters of congratulation and cordial greeting. One of these, who fought bravely in the Southern army during the late war, writes from a Northern State: "No one entering upon a field of duty so conscientiously as yourself, need have any fears of ultimate success; and I am sure the University is far better off than when it was first put into operation, after the revolutionary war; and I should judge the State authorities intend it shall prosper. With my best wishes for your success," &c. Another from the far South: "I hope, my dear sir, you have not forgotten me, as I entertain a most distinct and pleasant memory both of yourself and your class room. Many of my class-mates were killed near me in the army of Virginia, and I myself am writing to you with my left hand, having had my right arm amputated at the shoulder joint at the battle of Gettysburg," &c. And a class-mate writes, "The University must be made a great power for good. Of its final success in your hands I have no doubt; not however without opposition. The press will growl, prejudices will be excited, ridicule attempted. But I trust that in the genuine spirit of the



great Apostle, you may truly say, 'none of these things move me.'" And from another class-mate, an intimate associate in the morning of our youth, now filling a position of usefulness and honor in Delaware; and recently from a College-mate, a minister of the Gospel, residing in a sister State, quoting in his letter to me a prayer he had just been offering in his closet for the success and prosperity of the University. And from central and eastern and western North Carolina, come these messages full of hope and encouragement." More recently a distinguished graduate writes, "My mind often recurs in moments of leisure to my *alma mater*. It is the spot where the best memories of my past centre. And I trust that under your management, notwithstanding the prejudices that have been excited against it, the University will eclipse its former prosperity." And still more recently, from a class-mate who stood side by side with me in our four years of generous rivalry in the recitation room, and halls of the Philanthropic Society, and who has since received a flattering popular vote for Congress, "I have often recurred with pleasure to my *alma mater*—her classic memories and the generous rivalry of my fellows there. In a few years more, with God's blessing, I shall have two sons prepared for College. I wish them to be educated at the University where their father was. I conceive it to be the duty of every patriotic and chivalrous North Carolinian to build up and sustain the University, and to promote the cause of education throughout the masses. Let us correspond and remember the days of yore." And since the opening of the present new year, from a gifted clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church, now residing in a distant State, but belonging to one of the most respectable and highly esteemed families in North Carolina, "I retain very high veneration for the University. And although I left her under trying circumstances, and was not able to reap the full benefit of her training, still I have endeavored not to bring her into disrepute."

The *Alumni* are dispersed over nearly every State of the Union. By many of them their *alma mater* will be

ever warmly cherished. Should one of them ever wilfully add to her embarrassment?

Before the Institution can give promise of great prosperity and usefulness, the debt must be paid, the property redeemed and the former endowment replaced. In the present impoverished condition of our people, it is doubtful whether this should be done by taxation. As already intimated, many of these claims, especially those due the estate of the former President, and perhaps all others, are entirely just and should be met. The doors of the University ought not to be closed for debt, nor should it be allowed to languish. At this crisis in its affairs, I venture as an alumnus, to submit the following propositions:

1. That the *Alumni* and friends of the University unite in an effort for its rescue. That they address the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees, stating the amount they will contribute to pay off its legal debts. Payment to be made when there shall have been responses enough to cover the entire indebtedness. I have this day addressed such a letter to the Treasurer, offering to give one thousand dollars (\$1000) for this purpose so soon as the remainder of the required sum shall be covered by contributions of from \$10 to \$1000, or more.

2. I propose to such professed friends as have manifested so great concern for the Institution, and during the last two years have honored me by their frequent notices, that if each one of them who has borne part in the public defamation of the University, will give more reasonable and substantial evidence of sincere interest in its welfare, by the contribution of a sum equal to that offered by myself, I will, at once, if they desire it, resign my position and they may have control of the Institution. The debt being thus paid, I would have the satisfaction of seeing my successor enter upon duty with better promise than was given me. For the present it will occasion no surprise if I decline to quietly surrender the University to any one of those whose friendship must be determined by their zeal in defaming it, rather than by their liberality in rescuing it from the grasp of its creditors.

SOLOMON POOL.

CHAPEL HILL, Jan. 26, 1871.

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